Induction of AJT

5108. SHRI AIMADDUDDIN AHMED KHAN (DURRU): Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the frequency of MIG crashes has established the need for early induction of an Advanced Jet Trainer (AJT); and

(b) if so, what steps have been and are being taken for expediting acquisition of an AJT and at what stage the acquisition process stands at present?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) and (b) There is no relationship between MIG crashes and induction of an Advanced Jet Trainer. The major causes of accidents are human error, technical defect and bird hit. The Indian Air Force has identified the requirement of an Advanced Jet Trainer for safe and smooth transition of young trainee pilots to high performance/ technology aircraft in front line Squadrons. Various options for acquisition of an AJT are under examination by the Government. No time limit can be laid down for such a major acquisition.

Missing MIG 21 Aircraft

5109. SHRI LAJPAT RAI: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that an Indian Air Force MiG-21 aircraft went missing after taking off from Tejpur Air Base on 20 April, 2002;

(b) if so, whether its wreckage was not found even after 10 days;

(c) whether India has sought Bhutan's assistance in locating its wreckage in Bhutan;

(d) the number of persons at the time of flight in the aircraft; and

(e) the other details in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir.

(d) Two.

(e) On 20th April, 2002 Sqn Ldr Khan and Fg Offr Dahiya were on a fighter maneuvering exercise. After the completion of the exercise, the pilot gave a call that he would be rejoining on his own but he did not. Subsequently, there was no radar contact with the aircraft.

The cause of the accident has not been established as yet. Depending upon the ground reports, the likely area of the crash has been identified. The Bhutanese Government has also been approached to render all possible assistance in locating the wreckage of the aircraft and the missing pilots. The IAF has so far carried out 168 sorties.

The search operations are still in progress to locate the crash site.

The U.S. Assistance in India's military needs

5110. SHRI YADLAPATI VENKAT RAO: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the U.S. is assisting in India's military needs; and

(b) if so, the details of the proposed sale by the U.S. to improve the security of the country?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI GEORGE FERNANDES): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) It would not be possible to give further details, in the interest of national security.

Joint Arms Manufacturing Partnership with South Africa

5111. SHRI K. KALAVENKATA RAO: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that South Africa has proposed a Joint Arms Manufacturing Partnership with India;

(b) if so, whether the proposal involves transfer of technology to India and export of manufactured arms to other countries; and

(c) if so, what is India's response to this offer?